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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 005396

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [GZ](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: TFLE01: REACTION TO EVENTS IN LEBANON, GAZA

REF: A. AMMAN 5222
[1](#)B. AMMAN 5219
[1](#)C. RIYADH 5601
[1](#)D. AMMAN 5301

Classified By: Ambassador David Hale for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) Summary: Several non-violent demonstrations took place after Friday prayers July 14. The leader of the Islamic Action Front implicitly criticized the July 14 joint statement of King Abdullah and President Mubarak. Jordanians are following events closely. Most feel deep sympathy with the people of Lebanon, and anger toward Israel that extends in many cases to the U.S. as well. End summary.

Peaceful Protests -----

[1](#)2. (U) Following Friday prayers on July 14 three thousand protesters marched peacefully through downtown Amman calling for international intervention to halt Israeli military operations in Lebanon and Gaza (reftel). At smaller demonstrations organized by the professional associations, Israeli and American flags were burnt.

[1](#)3. (C) Al-Arabiyah correspondent Saad al-Silawi told poloff that Islamic Action Front SecGen Zaki Bani Irsheid told him that "the Front did not receive an invitation to attend the Friday after-prayer protests." Political columnist Fawzi Samhoury told poloff that opposition parties, including the IAF, did show up at the demonstration but did not take part when they concluded it was being organized by Jordanian authorities. Note: In times of regional tension, the GOJ traditionally seeks to channel street emotions into controlled demonstrations. End Note.

[1](#)4. (U) At the professional associations, protest later the same day, demonstrators chanted denunciations of unnamed Arab leaders who fail to support Hizballah, a jab at King Abdullah and President Mubarak. Bani Irsheid weighed in with further implicit criticism of Jordan, s King and other Arab moderates when he told media July 17 "the adventures of the resistance are a great deal more honorable than the brokerage of deals with the enemy," a reference to the Abdullah/Mubarak condemnation of Hizballah "adventures." Bani Irsheid, s comment continues six weeks of political confrontation between the GOJ and Islamists (refs A, B) that has, for the moment, been driven out off the front pages by the Lebanon crisis.

[1](#)5. (U) Editorial comment is overwhelmingly anti-Israeli, though a few columnists have argued, like King Abdullah, that Hizballah, s actions had ignited a conflict that would not serve Arab interests, and that Iran stood to gain.

JORDANIAN PRISONERS' FAMILIES APPEAL TO HIZBALLAH

¶6. (U) Saleh Ajlouni, the head of the Association of Families of Jordanian Prisoners (i.e., in Israeli jails), called on Hizballah in a media statement to include Jordanian prisoners in any prisoner exchange deal with Israel. In a statement to MENA, Ajlouni said there are 31 Jordanian prisoners held in Israeli jails. Note: The Association is a long-time critic of GOJ-GOI relations. End Note.

EXODUS FROM LEBANON FILLS AMMAN HOTELS

¶7. (U) The Jordanian Foreign Ministry provided bus transportation from Beirut to Amman for approximately 400 Jordanians July 13-14. Border contacts report over 6000 Lebanese have entered Jordan from Syria since July 13. As a result hotels across Amman are operating at over 90% capacity. The General Manager of the Sheraton told Ambassador that his hotel was full and that "lots of people were stuck in Amman" because flights out of the region are booked.

¶8. (C) Comment: Many Jordanians are following events in Lebanon hour by hour by satellite TV. Although the Jordanian leadership has publicly blamed Hizballah for initiating the current violence, Jordanians, from the street to the elite, sympathize overwhelmingly with the people of Lebanon and, in the grip of emotional media coverage, have already forgotten how the conflict really began. Many post contacts are quick to allege that U.S. support for Israel makes it complicit in IDF operations, and also fault the USG for failing to intervene to stop the violence. The palace press apparatus is giving the media a steady diet of the King's telephone diplomacy with world leaders. End Comment.
Hale